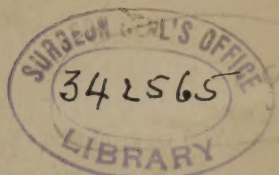


Letter from the Acting Surgeon General to the Secretary of War, advising the institution of a Commission, to be styled "A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces," together with a Draft of the Powers asked from the Government, and of the objects sought by the proposed Commission; also the Order for the Commission by the Secretary of War, and its approval by the President.



I.

Letter from the Acting Surgeon General to the Secretary of War.

SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE,

May 22, 1861.

HON. SIMON CAMERON, *Secretary of War*:

SIR: The sudden and large increase of the Army, more especially of the Volunteer force, has called the attention of this office to the necessity of some modifications and changes in the system of organization, as connected with the hygiene and comforts of the soldiers; more particularly in relation to the class of men who, actuated by patriotism, have repaired with unexampled promptness to the defence of the institutions and laws of the country.

The pressure upon the Medical Bureau has been very great and urgent; and though all the means at its disposal have been industriously used, much remains to be accomplished by directing the intelligent mind of the country to practical results connected with the comforts of the soldier by preventive and sanitary means.

The Medical Bureau would, in my judgment, derive important and useful aid from the counsels and well-directed efforts of an intelligent and scientific Commission, to be styled, "A Commission of Inquiry

and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces," and acting in co-operation with the Bureau, in elaborating and applying such facts as might be elicited from the experience and more extended observation of those connected with armies, with reference to the diet and hygiene of troops, and the organization of Military Hospitals, etc.

This commission is not intended to interfere with, but to strengthen the present organization, introducing and elaborating such improvements as the advanced stage of Medical Science might suggest; more particularly as regards the class of men who, in this war of sections, may be called to abandon the comforts of home, and be subject to the privations and casualties of war.

The views of this office were expressed in a communication of May 18, 1861, in a crude and hasty manner, as to the examination of recruits, the proposed organization of cooks, nurses, &c., to which I beg leave to refer.

The selection of this Board is of the greatest importance.

In connection with those gentlemen who originated this investigation, with many others, I would suggest the following members, not to exceed five, to convene in Washington, who should have power to fill vacancies and appoint a competent Secretary:

REVEREND HENRY W. BELLOWES, D. D.

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER DALLAS BACHE, L. L. D.

PROFESSOR WOLCOTT GIBBS, M. D.

JEFFRIES WYMAN, M. D.

W. H. VAN BUREN, M. D.

It would be proper, also, to associate with this Board an officer of the Medical Staff of the Army, to be selected by the Secretary of War, familiar with the organization of Military Hospitals and the details of field service.

Respectfully submitted:

R. C. WOOD,

Acting Surgeon General.

II.

Draft of Powers asked from the Government by Sanitary Delegation
to the President and the Secretary of War.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 23, 1861.

To the HON. SECRETARY OF WAR:

The Medical Bureau of the U. S. Army having asked for the appointment of a Sanitary Commission, in aid of its own overtasked energies, the Committee of the New York Delegation to the Government on Sanitary Affairs beg leave, at the request of the Medical Bureau, and as explanatory of its wishes, to state what precise *powers* are sought by the proposed Commission, and what specific *objects* are aimed at.

POWERS.

1. The Commission being organized for purposes only of inquiry and advice, asks for no legal powers, but only the official recognition and moral countenance of the Government, which will be secured by its public appointment. It asks for a recommendatory order, addressed in its favor to all officers of the Government, to further its inquiries; for permission to correspond and confer, on a confidential footing, with the Medical Bureau and the War Department, proffering such suggestions and counsel as its investigations and studies may from time to time prompt and enable it to offer.

2. The Commission seeks no pecuniary remuneration from the Government. Its motives being humane and patriotic, its labors will be its own reward. The assignment to them of a room in one of the public buildings, with stationery and other necessary conveniences, would meet their expectations in this direction.

3. The Commission asks leave to sit through the war, either in Washington, or when and where it may find it most convenient and useful; but it will disband should experience render its operations

embarrassing to the Government, or less necessary and useful than it is now supposed they will prove.

OBJECTS.

The general object of the Commission is, through suggestions reported from time to time to the Medical Bureau and the War Department, to bring to bear upon the health, comfort, and *morale* of our troops, the fullest and ripest teachings of Sanitary Science in its application to military life, whether deduced from theory or practical observation, from general hygienic principles, or from the experience of the Crimean, the East Indian, and the Italian wars. Its objects are purely advisory.

The specific points to which its attention would be directed may here be partly indicated, but in some part must depend upon the course of events, and the results of its own observations and promptings, when fairly at work. If it knew precisely what the results of its own inquiries would be, it would state them at once, without asking for that authority and those governmental facilities essential to a successful investigation of the subject. As the Government may select its own Commissioners—the persons named in the recommendation of the Medical Bureau being wholly undesirous, however willing to serve, if other persons more deserving of the confidence of the Government and of the public can be nominated—it is hoped that the character of the Commission will be the best warrant the Government can have that the inquiries of the Commission, both as to their nature and the manner of conducting them, will be pursued with discretion and a careful eye to avoiding impertinent and offensive interference with the legal authority and official rights of any of the Bureaus with which it may be brought in contact.

SPECIFICATIONS.

I. MATERIEL. II. PREVENTION. III. RELIEF.

I. MATERIEL OF THE VOLUNTEERS.—The Commission proposes a practical inquiry into the materiel of the Volunteer Force, with ref-

erence to the laws and usages of the several States in the matter of Inspection, with the hope of assimilating their regulations with those of the Army proper, alike in the appointment of medical and other officers and in the rigorous application of just rules and principles to recruiting and inspection laws. This inquiry would exhaust every topic appertaining to the original *materiel* of the army, considered as a subject of sanitary and medical care.

II. PREVENTION.—The Commission would inquire with scientific thoroughness into the subject of Diet, Cooking, Cooks, Clothing, Tents, Camping Grounds, Transports, Transitory Depots, with their exposures, Camp Police, with reference to settling the question, How far the regulations of the Army proper are or can be practically carried out among the Volunteer Regiments, and what changes or modifications are desirable from their peculiar character and circumstances? Everything appertaining to outfit, cleanliness, precautions against damp, cold, heat, malaria, infection; crude, unvaried, or ill-cooked food, and an irregular or careless regimental commissariat, would fall under this head.

III. RELIEF.—The Commission would inquire into the organization of Military Hospitals, general and regimental; the precise regulations and routine through which the services of the patriotic women of the country may be made available as nurses; the nature and sufficiency of Hospital supplies; the method of obtaining and regulating all other extra and unbought supplies contributing to the comfort of the sick; the question of ambulances and field service, and of extra medical aid; and whatever else relates to the care, relief, or cure of the sick and wounded—their investigations being guided by the highest and latest medical and military experience, and carefully adapted to the nature and wants of our immediate army, and its peculiar origin and circumstances.

Very respectfully submitted, in behalf of the New York delegation.

HENRY W. BELLOWS, *Chairman*.

WILLIAM H. VAN BUREN, M. D.

JACOB HARSEN, M. D.

ELISHA HARRIS, M. D.

III.

Sanitary Commission ordered by Secretary of War, and approved by the President.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

Washington, June 9, 1861.

The Secretary of War has learned, with great satisfaction, that at the instance and in pursuance of the suggestion of the Medical Bureau, in a communication to this office, dated May 22, 1861, Henry W. Bellows, D. D., Prof. A. D. Bache, L.L.D., Prof. Jeffries Wyman, M. D., Prof. Wolcott Gibbs, M. D., W. H. Van Buren, M. D., Samuel G. Howe, M. D., R. C. Wood, Surgeon U. S. A., G. W. Cullum, U. S. A., Alexander E. Shiras U. S. A., have mostly consented, in connection with such others as they may choose to associate with them, to act as "A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces," and without remuneration from the Government. The Secretary has submitted their patriotic proposal to the consideration of the President, who directs the acceptance of the services thus generously offered.

The Commission, in connection with a Surgeon of the U. S. A., to be designated by the Secretary, will direct its inquiries to the principles and practices connected with the inspection of recruits and enlisted men; the sanitary condition of the volunteers; to the means of preserving and restoring the health, and of securing the general comfort and efficiency of troops; to the proper provision of cooks, nurses, and hospitals; and to other subjects of like nature.

The Commission will frame such rules and regulations, in respect of the objects and modes of its inquiry, as may seem best adapted to the purpose of its constitution, which, when approved by the Secretary, will be established as general guides of its investigations and action.

A room with necessary conveniences will be provided in the City of Washington for the use of the Commission, and the members will

meet when and at such places as may be convenient to them for consultation, and for the determination of such questions as may come properly before the Commission.

In the progress of its inquiries, the Commission will correspond freely with the Department and with the Medical Bureau, and will communicate to each, from time to time, such observations and results as it may deem expedient and important.

The Commission will exist until the Secretary of War shall otherwise direct, unless sooner dissolved by its own action.

SIMON CAMERON,

Secretary of War.

I approve the above.

A. LINCOLN.

JUNE 13, 1861.

Organization of the Commission, Washington, June 13, 1861.

HENRY W. BELLOWS, *President.*

PROF. A. D. BACHE, *Vice President.*

ELISHA HARRIS, M. D., *Corresponding Sec'y.*

GEORGE W. CULLUM, *U. S. Army.*

ALEXANDER E. SHIRAS, *U. S. Army.*

ROBERT C. WOOD, M. D., *U. S. Army.*

WILLIAM H. VAN BUREN, M. D.

WOLCOTT GIBBS, M. D.

SAMUEL G. HOWE, M. D.

CORNELIUS R. AGNEW, M. D.

J. S. NEWBERRY, M. D.

GEORGE T. STRONG, *Treasurer.*

SANITARY COMMISSION.

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